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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 8196
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 5926
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2817
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 2241
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 5094
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGKOK 004749

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TH](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: MFA READOUT ON THAKSIN TRIP TO BURMA

REF: A. STATE 127498

[1](#)B. BANGKOK 04725

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Classified By: Ambassador Ralph Boyce for reasons 1.4 b and d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On August 4, Ambassador delivered Reftel A demarche to MFA Permanent Secretary Krit Garnjana-Goonchorn. Krit provided a detailed account of Thaksin's visit to Burma including how the trip developed, Thaksin's rationale for going, and a summary of the meeting between Thaksin, Than Shwe and Maung Aye. Absent from the account is insight into reaction of Than Shwe to Thaksin's message. Krit said that Thaksin attempted to call Ambassador to alert him of the trip, but was unable to connect - presumably because the Ambassador was traveling back to Bangkok from the U.S. at the time.

GENESIS OF THE TRIP - AN UNLIKELY MESSENGER

[1](#)2. (C) Krit told Ambassador that Thaksin has been concerned for some time that since former intelligence chief Khin Nyunt was purged a "total disconnect" had developed between the RTG and the regime. He noted that Thaksin had not visited Burma since December 2004. Thaksin had been looking for a way to address this problem and he saw an opportunity while he was in Pattaya to deliver opening remarks for a conference of ASEAN intelligence agencies on July 28 (see Reftel B). According to Krit, Thaksin noticed that one of the key delegates from Burma was a "young man." Thaksin found it odd that such a young man would be selected for this delegation, and he thought that maybe this man had some ties to the senior generals. Thaksin approached the man (Krit did not know his name) and mentioned that there were a number of things he wanted to convey to Than Shwe. Krit believed that Thaksin did not know what, if anything, to expect. Two days later, on July 31, Than Shwe sent word that he would agree to meet Thaksin in Naypyitaw on August 2. (Comment: FM Kantathi is quoted in the August 4 edition of the Bangkok Post as saying: "Yes, it was short notice and the visit was an urgent and unprepared one, but that's the way Thailand manages relations with neighbors." End Comment.)

[1](#)3. (C) Given the very short notice of the trip, there appears

to have been little coordination with ASEAN capitals or other interested parties. Krit said that Thaksin attempted to call Ambassador, but that he was unable to connect. (Note: Ambassador was en route from the U.S. to Bangkok at the time. End note.) Thaksin did have time to call Philippine President Arroyo to alert her to the trip. Krit said that Thaksin assured Arroyo that he would convey the message that ASEAN wants to be treated like a close friend, but the Generals need to keep ASEAN informed of what they are doing, otherwise ASEAN will be embarrassed.

THAKSIN'S RATIONALE

14. (C) Krit said that Thaksin's rationale for going to see the regime was to help repair the disconnect between the regime and the international community. According to Krit, Thaksin was concerned that the message of mounting frustration in ASEAN and the rest of the international community was not being conveyed to Than Shwe by the delegates that Burma sends to meet with the outside world. Krit urged Ambassador not to be distracted by the "drama and apparent secrecy of the visit," but rather to focus on Thaksin's sincere effort to deliver this message directly to Than Shwe.

THE MEETING

15. (C) According to Krit, Than Shwe was originally scheduled to meet one-on-one with Thaksin. Krit said that Thaksin suggested that Maung Aye attend the meeting as well, principally because Maung Aye's English is better than Than Shwe's. Than Shwe agreed, and Maung Aye joined the meeting along with two notetakers.

16. (C) Krit said that Thaksin told Than Shwe that his purpose

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in visiting was to "deliver hope" to Than Shwe and encourage Burma to engage with and "embrace" the international community. Krit said Thaksin told Than Shwe that he should "display a consciousness of the concerns" of the international community and explain themselves "using the terminology of democracy that is familiar to the outside world." Thaksin urged Than Shwe to use "the terms of democracy" explain to the outside world the process of drafting the new constitution, the regime's ideas on sharing power and on devolving power to the local level. Krit said Thaksin went on to comment that Burma may have ample natural resources, but it needs to develop the basic essentials of good governance and a good legal system so that potential international investors can be confident that their investments are safe.

17. (C) Krit said that Thaksin suggested the first step to "display consciousness" of the international community's concerns would be for Than Shwe to come out of Burma and attend international meetings. He assured Than Shwe that "people will be keen to hear and see you." Krit said Thaksin implored Than Shwe not to become reclusive like the North Koreans. He suggested that Than Shwe attend the September 2006 summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Havana, offering: "I'll take you around."

ASSK

18. (C) Krit says that Thaksin brought up the topic of Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) with Than Shwe. He said that Thaksin began by pointing out that he is the most frequent high-level visitor to Burma, but that he never asks to see ASSK. According to Krit, Thaksin assured Than Shwe that he was not there to defend ASSK or act as her advocate. That said, Krit said Thaksin urged Than Shwe to "do something, explain your actions and say something (positive) about what will be done

with her."

¶9. (C) According to Krit, Than Shwe's reaction was to say that ASSK "harbors only animosity" toward the regime. Than Shwe said that every time she is released she "acts in ways that are detrimental to national unity." At that point, according to Krit, Maung Aye interjected saying that ASSK "is too head-strong" and asserted that there is "no need to meet with her." (Comment: FM Kantathi claims to have urged the Burmese to release ASSK during his side meeting with the Foreign Minister. According to press reports, Kantathi claims that Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win told him that they are "looking for a way to release ASSK," but just could not say exactly when she would be released. Judging from the reaction of Than Shwe and Maung Aye, Kantathi's so-called optimism appears overstated. End Comment.)

¶10. (C) Absent from Krit's readout of the meeting was any reaction on the part of Than Shwe to Thaksin's message. Apart from the less than encouraging statements regarding ASSK, the only comments Krit shared from Than Shwe were that he welcomed Thaksin as "a close friend" and the first head of government to visit the new capital of Naypyitaw. Krit acknowledged that the trip produced no tangible results, but said that it is Thaksin's hope that the Generals will "ponder this message from a friend who risked a great deal in order to deliver it."

DEMARCHE DELIVERED

¶11. (C) After hearing Krit's readout of the visit, Ambassador delivered Reftel A demarche. Ambassador emphasized that the most disturbing thing about the trip was the surprise and lack of consultation. Krit responded by saying that Thaksin often acts on his instincts and is "a person of panache and flair with a penchant for drama and intrigue." Krit remarked that when he first learned of the trip on July 31, "my eyebrows lifted and I was worried about the dust that it would kick up." Ambassador thanked Krit for the detailed account of the visit and said it would be reported immediately to Washington.

COMMENT

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¶12. (C) Krit's account fills in some gaps in our understanding as to how this ill-advised trip came to pass. Most of the Thai press is not buying the official line; rather, there is widespread speculation that the trip was undertaken to advance Thaksin's business interests. Krit urged that we not be distracted by the "drama and 'apparent' secrecy of the visit," but that's precisely what everyone is doing.
BOYCE